

They are found in little flocks of from two or three to as many dozen, and associate in the utmost intimacy with *Calidris arenaria*. On approach they run swiftly, with lowered heads, only taking flight when hard pressed; but they scatter and straggle so much that it is difficult to kill many at a shot. At high tide they are found in the loose, uneven, dry sand just above the water-mark, but at other times feed in the wet sand and among the weed-covered rocks, quite among the breakers. They fly rapidly, in close flocks, wheeling so as to show alternately the upper and under parts. Their note is a low mellow whistle. Those that I shot were not very fat. In the winter plumage the rufous-brown cap is wanting, the crown being nearly or quite the same colour as the back. The bill is black; the eyes dark brown; the legs pale livid blue; the feet blackish. Length from 6·5 to 7 inches, extent of wings 13·5 to 14 inches.

I should like much to take my readers with me on the Pacific, that we might study together such rare and interesting birds as *Cerorhina monocerata*, *Ptychorhamphus aleuticus*, *Brachyrhamphus hypoleucus*, and the numbers of little-known Petrels that enrich the coast of Lower California. But the length of this paper warns me that I must check my restless pen.

Washington, D. C., January 29, 1866.

XXIII.—On the Genus *Oxynotus* of *Mauritius* and *Réunion*.

By FRANÇOIS POLLEN, Honorary Assistant of the Royal Museum of Leyden, &c.

(Plates VII. and VIII.)

A SHORT time since, on paying a visit to Mr. Edward Newton, I had the opportunity of reading in 'The Ibis' for 1865 (p. 530) some remarks by its editor on my "Note sur l'*Oxynotus ferrugineus*," lately published by the Société Impériale d'Acclimatation et d'Histoire Naturelle de l'île de la Réunion. I must acknowledge that my description and figures of the *Oxynotus* of Réunion do not apply to the allied bird of Mauritius, and that I probably made a mistake in describing the former under the name of *O. ferrugineus*. When I published that paper I had never seen a specimen of the Mauritian bird; and it was

only on my visit to the Museum at the Royal College of Port Louis that I first had the pleasure of seeing one.

Thanks to the kindness of Mr. Bouton, I had the opportunity of examining examples of the Mauritian *Oxynotus*, and of comparing them with those of Réunion. I was then convinced that the remarks of the Editor of 'The Ibis' were exact and correct.

I may here state that M. Jules Verreaux, in the "Annexe" to M. Maillard's 'Notes sur l'île de la Réunion'*, says (p. 162), "TUTUIT. *Oxynotus ferrugineus*, Sw. (*Lanius ferrugineus*, Gm.). Oiseau décrit sur la femelle, qui est rousse, le type venant de l'île Maurice"; and also remark that the Colonial Museum at St. Denis possesses a specimen of the Réunion bird, determined by this learned ornithologist to be a young male of *O. ferrugineus*, whereas I am now sure that it is an adult female of what I am about to describe as a new species; for, on comparing examples of *Oxynoti* from the two islands, I find such differences of size and colouring between them as to lead me to believe that they do not belong to the same species; and when we know that these differences are constant, so that in Réunion an *Oxynotus* has never been found with the form and colour of that of Mauritius, nor in Mauritius has there ever been found an *Oxynotus* like that of Réunion, we must conclude that the birds of the one island are distinct from those of the other.

The following Table shows the relative proportions of the birds of both islands:—

	Mauritius.		Réunion.	
	♂	♀	♂	♀
Long. tot.	175 mm.	190 mm.	177 mm.	177 mm.
„ tarsi.	23	26	24	25
„ dig. med. sine ungue	16	16	15	15
„ mandib. sup.	30	28	20	20
„ alæ a carp.	100	104	95	94
„ caudæ	82	87	90	87

From this it is apparent that the Mauritian *Oxynotus* exceeds that of Réunion in a majority of the above dimensions.

The males of the Mauritian species have the upper part of the head, back, and rump of a *dark smoke-grey*, in immature (?) specimens slightly tinged with rufous. The chin and throat

* [Cf. Ibis, 1863, pp. 103, 104.]

are white, changing on the upper parts of the breast into dirty white mixed with grey, which extends over the belly. The primaries are black, with the basal half or more of the inner webs white, so as to form a concealed white bar, the fourth and fifth being also externally edged, and, as well as the secondaries, tipped with white. The rectrices are black, edged above with grey, and broadly tipped with white. The under tail-coverts are white. Bill black; legs lead-colour.

The males of the Réunion species have the upper part of the head, back, and rump of a *clear bluish-grey*. The chin is white, changing on the throat into bluish-grey, which extends over the breast. The primaries and secondaries are much as in the Mauritian species, but the white edgings and tips less conspicuous. The rectrices are black, broadly tipped with white. The belly and under tail-coverts are white. Bill brownish black; legs dark lead-colour.

But it is in the plumage of the other sex that the greatest diversity is to be noticed. The adult females of the Mauritian species have the upper part of the head dark olive-brown, with a yellowish line over the eye; the lores grey; the cheeks yellowish-white, striped with dark brown. Upper parts of the neck, back, and rump dark rufous-brown. Chin rufous-white, streaked with brown, and passing into bright ferruginous, which extends to the vent; the tibial feathers slightly barred with dark brown. Remiges and rectrices dull brown, edged with ferruginous, the latter broadly tipped with dull ferruginous-white. Bill brownish-black; legs dirty lead-colour.

In the Réunion species, on the other hand, the adult females have the upper parts of the head, back, and rump dark olive-brown, tinged with ferruginous on the latter. A whitish line over the eye; the lores and cheeks bluish-white, streaked with dark grey. Chin bluish-white, passing into white slightly tinged with ochraceous, which extends to the vent, and is thickly barred with dark brown on the sides of the neck, the breast, belly, and tibiæ. Primaries dull brown, narrowly edged with fulvous-white; secondaries the same, but more broadly edged and tipped with fulvous-white; tertials edged with light ferru-

ginous. Rectrices dull brown, more or less broadly tipped with white. Bill brownish-black; legs dark lead-colour.

The differences thus pointed out are more clearly visible in the accompanying plates (Plates VII. and VIII.), wherein the birds from the two islands are represented at one-half their natural size. Their manner of life and their song are also quite different; and should ornithologists agree with me in considering the *Oxynotus* of Réunion a species distinct from that of Mauritius, I hope they will allow me to designate the former by the name of *O. newtoni* as a proof of my regard for Mr. Edward Newton, who is known as a careful student of ornithology; and further, also, that they will adopt for the latter the name of *O. typicus* recently conferred upon it by Dr. Hartlaub (Journ. für Ornith. 1865, p. 160)*. I must not, however, fail to remind them that my friend, Dr. Auguste Vinson of Réunion, was one of the first to observe that the *Oxynotus* of that island was a distinct species, as in his manuscript notes he says “Nous n’avons trouvé nulle-part la description de cet oiseau.”

✓ It surprised the reviewer of my paper (Ibis, 1865, p. 530) to learn that *Oxynotus* is useful to mankind, as he mentions my statement that it inhabits the most impenetrable forests. I can assure him that *O. newtoni* is of very great service as a destroyer of the insects which do much harm to the palm-trees (which furnish the colonists with the excellent *Choux-palmiste*) and to other trees of value in this island.

* [Averse as we are to the change of a name by which any species has become known, there seems to be in this case a greater amount of legality than usual for the alteration proposed. There is no doubt that MM. Quoy and Gaimard were mistaken in referring the subject of their figure, which “provient de l’île de France” (Voy. *Uranie*, Zool. pl. 17), to the Rufous-bellied Shrike, or “Fiscal” of Latham (Synops. i. p. 163), the *Lanius ferrugineus* of Gmelin (Syst. Nat. I. i. p. 306), a very well-known species which inhabits the Cape of Good Hope (Strickland, Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. vii. p. 29; Sundevall, Crit. Framställn. Le Vaillant, no. 68) and belongs to the genus *Malaconotus*. But if the specific name *ferrugineus*, has on that account to be discarded, Swainson’s publication (Fauna Bor.-Am. ii. p. 483) of that of *rufiventer*, from the Paris Museum, would seem to give the latter priority, and it is a question whether the Mauritian bird will not have to stand as *Oxynotus rufiventer*.—ED.]

Hitherto nothing is known of the manner of breeding of the Réunion *Oxynotus*; but my friend Mr. Edward Newton has been more fortunate with respect to that of the Mauritian species, and he has favoured me by adding the following communication respecting it:—

“The *Oxynotus* of Mauritius, or “Cuisinier” as it is, for what reason I do not know, called, begins to build towards the end of October or beginning of November. Two of the three nests that I have found were placed in small trees not more than twenty feet high, and of a sort of mop-like growth, the nest being nearly in the centre of the “mop,” and almost out of sight from below, on account of the small, thickly-growing leaves. One tree was a “Bois-balai” (*Erythroxylum hypericifolium*), the other a “Bois de pomme” (*Lyzygium glomeratum*). The bark of both these trees is as white as that of a European birch. The third nest was in a tree of somewhat thinner growth, but, I believe, also a “Bois-balai,” and was easily to be seen from the ground. One of the nests, which is now before me and contained two eggs when I took it, is flat, shallow, and very small for the size of the bird (whose head and tail projected considerably on either side), being 4·5 inches in external, and 3 inches in internal diameter. The height of its walls is nowhere more than 2·5 inches. It is composed of long fern-roots and tendrils of some plant, studded on the outside with a common white and black lichen, and well secured by spiders’ webs woven over its outer surface. M. Pollen, in his ‘Note’ on the *Oxynotus* of Réunion, stated his belief that its nest would be “dans la forme des piegrièches (*Lani*).” The nest of the Mauritian species is very like that of *Lanius rufus*, both in size and general appearance. The eggs measure about 1·07 inch in length, by about ·74 inch in breadth. They are of a very pale sea-green, thickly marked with ash-coloured spots of a middle size, and blotched, especially between the larger circumference and the obtuse end of the egg, with patches of olive-brown, these latter markings, though of irregular shape and size, having a general longitudinal tendency.

“The “Cuisinier” is found, I believe, in every part of the island where the original forest is left; but I fear that before

many years, when its haunts have disappeared, it also will vanish. It is a very silent bird, and not often heard except in the breeding-season, when it has a cry which reminds me of that of the Nuthatch (*Sitta cæsia*). Its other note is harsh, and, though not so loud, is not unlike that of a Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*).

“Besides the peculiarities of plumage which the genera *Oxynotus* and *Ceblepyris* possess in common, the habits of the two are, as far as my observation goes, very similar; and, taking *C. cana* as an example, I fail to see any real generic distinctions between them. Specimens of the *Oxynotus* of Réunion having been kindly forwarded to me by M. Pollen, I am enabled to express my undoubted opinion that they are specifically distinct from the Mauritian bird.”

I may conclude by observing that at first sight the female of *Oxynotus newtoni* might be taken for the young of *O. typicus*.

St. Denis, Réunion.

17th February, 1865.

[We may here add a description of the nestling of the *Oxynotus* of Mauritius from a specimen sent by Mr. Edward Newton, and of which a figure is also given in Plate VII. General colour above somewhat like that of the adult female, but each feather tipped with light fawn-colour, so as to give a mottled or barred appearance, resembling that of the nestling *Turdus viscivorus*. The remiges and rectrices of a paler hue than in the adult female, with more conspicuous edgings and tips of a lighter colour. The throat nearly white in the middle, passing into light fawn-colour, each feather having a mesial longitudinal streak of brown. At this stage the feathers of the rump do not seem to have the characteristic stiff bases.—ED.]

XXIV.—*On the Ornithology of Palestine.* Part IV.

By the Rev. H. B. TRISTRAM, M.A., F.L.S., C.M.Z.S.

[Continued from p. 88.] ✓

THE Scansorial group is very scantily represented in Palestine. In many parts of the country, as in the Ghor, as well as in the uplands of the south, scansorial birds are wholly absent; in the other parts the species are very few. The scarcity of wood alone



J. Wolf lith.

M. & N. Hankart imp.

OXYNOTUS TYPICUS.



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J. Wolf. del.

M. & N. Hanhart, imp.

OXYNOTUS NEWTONI.